



Town of Chelmsford

Mandatory Recycling Case Study

MassDEP Municipal Waste *Reduction Toolkit*



Town Statistics:

Population: 32,967
Households: 12,900
Median Income: \$82,676

Overview/Introduction: In 2005, with trash disposal at an all time high – 16,000 tons of trash incinerated at \$67.50/ton and a recycling rate of 16% - the Town of Chelmsford adopted a bylaw prohibiting the disposal of recyclable materials in the trash. This bylaw went into effect on January 30, 2006 and was applicable to all households, including apartments and condominiums, municipal and school properties.

Outreach:

- Direct outreach to building and property managers;
- Insert in tax bills to all residents;
- Town Manager notified all municipal department heads and employees that EVERYONE must recycle;
- Articles ran on the front page of the local newspaper;
- Created information for town web page, including information on where to get a recycling bin, resulting in more bins being distributed than ever had been before.
- Worked with hauler to create stickers and enforcement procedures.

Enforcement Implementation:

- Hauler instructed to leave cardboard behind unless it was prepared for recycling;
- Hauler would place informational sticker on offending item so resident would know why it was left and what to do;
- All visible recyclables, fluorescent bulbs, TV's, and computer monitors were also left behind and stickered;
- Town recycling coordinator followed recycling/trash route behind the recycling truck noting how recycling was prepared and picked up by hauler;
- Coordinator found that hauler was initially leaving correctly prepared cardboard for recycling on the curb for the trash truck to collect, which led to the town fining the hauler;
- Monitoring by coordinator continued for a period of 2 months, but after 1st week, most households were properly recycling their cardboard;
- Town added a 3rd dumpster behind town hall for residential drop-off cardboard.

Results:

- The bylaw went into effect on January 30, 2006. In February 2006, the town generated 93 fewer tons of trash than in February 2005.
- Trash tonnage continued to decline in March/April by 279 tons compared to the previous April.
- Even with the flooding in May 2005 and the large amounts of trash generated as a result, the town managed to produce less trash than in May 2005.
- The first three months under the bylaw the town recycled 570 tons of paper, 255 tons of containers, and 40 tons of cardboard.
- Overall, Chelmsford residents recycled 160 tons more during the first three months than during those same months the previous year, an average increase of 23%.
- By reducing trash tonnage, the town saved \$35,000 in disposal costs compared to the same period last year in the first 6 months alone.
- For calendar year 2006 the Town of Chelmsford reduced their trash tonnage by over 1400 tons compared to CY 2005, this is after many years of steadily increasing trash tonnages.
- In the first year of the program, the town has saved over \$99,000 in disposal fees and is recycling considerably more and throwing less in the trash.